THE GREEK HEROES

ILLUSTRATIONS BY

ARTHUR RACKHAM, R.W.S.

Albertine Osius Seat 43
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THE GREEK HEROES

"When Orestes saw the Furies, all his courage left him and he fled before them." (*See page* 60.)

THE GREEK HEROES

STORIES TRANSLATED FROM NIEBUHR

WITH ADDITIONS

With Four Coloured Plates and Numerous other Illustrations by

ARTHUR RACKHAM, A.R.W.S.

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CONTENTS

	PAGE
The Argonauts	9
The Prowess of Hercules	21
The Heraclidæ	54
The Story of Perseus	68
The Story of Theseus	82

LIST OF COLOURED PLATES

"When Orestes saw the Furies, all his courage left him and he fled before them" . . . . . *Frontispiece*

"Jason and his companions drew their swords and tried to hit them, but could do nothing" . . . *Facing page* 12

"Hercules seized her by the neck, out of which the nine heads grew . „ 27

"Perseus said, 'Fair damsel, put all fear aside—I have freed you—and now you belong to me'" . „ 78

LIST OF BLACK AND WHITE ILLUSTRATIONS

PAGE

"Fire Came Out of their Mouths and Nostrils" . 17

"He did not Loosen his Hold of the Dog until He had Reached the Upper World" . . . 45

"She took the Blood" 51

"Oxylus had only One Eye" 57

"Borne by the Winds and the Currents" . . 69

"The Dragon Lay Coiled around the Trees" . 73

"Seized Him by the Throat" 85

"He Lay Breathless and Panting" 95

THE GREEK HEROES

THE ARGONAUTS

THERE was once upon a time in the land of Greece a King who was called Athamas, and his wife's name was Nephela. They had two children, a brave son and a fair daughter, who loved each other. The son was named Phryxus and the daughter Helle. Now the father was a wicked man; he drove away his wife, the mother of his children, and married another woman, Ino, who was as bad as himself.

She ill-treated the poor children, did not even give them enough to eat, clothed them in rags, and often beat them, whether they deserved it or not, just because they used to weep for their own lost mother. She was certainly a very bad step-mother.

At last the idea came to her to sacrifice the boy Phryxus: but when he was taken to the altar, the god Hermes, or Mercury, brought a beautiful big ram with fleece of gold. This ram could ride on the clouds, and on his back, with its golden fleece, Mercury set Phryxus, and his sister Helle, and told them they were to ride through the air until they came to Colchis.

Happily the ram knew the way; the children had to hold on to his horns with one hand,

and the other arm they put round each other's necks. But poor Helle got so tired that she could hold on no longer, so she fell down into the sea and was drowned; and to this day we call that sea the Hellespont, which means Helle's sea. Phryxus wept bitterly because he had lost his sister, but he went on his way, on and on until he came to Colchis. There he sacrificed the ram and nailed the Golden Fleece to an oak tree.

II.

After this, another King reigned in Thessaly, called Pelias. He had a brother, Æson, and this brother had a son whose name was Jason, a brave youth and comely: he lived with his father, away from the city.

Now King Pelias had once been told that a man who should come into the town wearing only one shoe, should wrest his kingdom from him. It so happened that King Pelias gave a feast, to which Jason was bidden. In order to reach the town, Jason had to wade through a brook; there were not many bridges in those days. As there had been a great storm in the night and much rain had fallen, the stream was swollen and flowed as rapidly as a mountain torrent. Well, the laces of Jason's sandals gave way, and he lost one of them in the brook, so he arrived at the King's palace wearing only one shoe! When King Pelias saw this he was terrified, and told Jason he must at once leave the country and not come back until he could bring the Golden Fleece.

III.

JASON was not at all frightened; he sent invitations to many brave youths to go with him, for those who should succeed in winning the Golden Fleece would have to fight both with savage beasts and wicked men.

So he built a great ship for himself and his companions. The goddess Athene, or Minerva, loved him, so she helped him and gave him a tree which was to be the mast of the ship; it was a wonderful mast, for it could always give Jason advice when he needed it.

The ship was named Argo, and those who sailed in her were called the Argonauts. Among the Argonauts were Hercules and the two winged brothers, Zetus and Calaïs, who could fly in the air: also a hero named Pollux, who could overthrow all who boxed with him.

So they came in their ship to a land whose King was Amycus; whenever strangers dared to come to his land, he fought with them, and as he was very strong, he killed them all! But Pollux, being angered, threw him to the ground, and slew him.

IV.

THEN the Argonauts sailed on and came to a town called Salmydessa, where lived a King called Phineus. This King had had the misfortune to offend Jupiter, and as a punishment, Jupiter had blinded him. Also, whenever this poor man sat at the table to eat, great and dreadful birds flew in. These were called Harpies; they had skin like iron armour, so that when the servants of the

blind Phineus shot them or tried to beat them away, they could not even wound them. They had, too, great sharp claws, with which they could tear men's flesh. As soon as the food was brought in, they came and bore it away; so the unlucky Phineus could never eat in peace, and was nearly starved.

When the heroes arrived, he told them of his misfortunes, weeping, and implored them to help him. So they seated themselves with him at the table. The meats were brought in as usual, and as usual in flew the Harpies. Jason and his companions drew their swords and tried to hit them, but could do nothing. Then the winged sons of Boreas, Zetus and Calaïs flew up into the air; this so terrified the Harpies that they flew away and the two heroes flew after them, far far away At last the Harpies, who were tired and dazed with fright, fell into the sea and were drowned. Then Zetus and Calaïs came back, and poor Phineus could at last rest and eat his food in comfort.

V.

As soon as the winds were favourable the heroes once more went on board their ship, and sailed away towards Colchis. When they said farewell to Phineus, he kissed and embraced them, thanking them many times for their help in his great trouble, and as a sign of his gratitude he gave them good counsel.

In the far northern seas, where the sun never shines and where it is always winter, there float many icebergs; in like manner, in the great sea

"Jason and his companions drew their swords and tried to hit them, but could do nothing."

over which the Argonauts had to sail, were two huge rocks, called Symplegades. These rocks were as high as mountains, and when they knocked violently against each other, which frequently happened, everything which was between them at the time was destroyed. Even the fish died, and any bird that was flying through was instantly killed. Whenever they saw a ship and knew that she must pass between them, they waited until she was in the middle, and then broke her into little bits, and killed everybody who was on board.

Jupiter had placed these rocks in the sea so that no ship should reach Colchis.

Now King Phineus knew that always after they had dashed against each other, the rocks immediately separated, leaving a wide space between them; he also knew that it was their custom to come together whenever they saw that a fish desired to swim, or a bird to fly, or a ship to sail between them. Therefore he was able to give wise counsel to the heroes; they did his bidding and came safely through the dangerous passage, and I will tell you how they managed it.

VI.

When the Argonauts in their good ship sailed up to the rocks they were far apart, but they began at once to come nearer, gradually nearer. The heroes sailed towards them, and as soon as they reached the entrance of the passage, one of them stood on the prow of the ship, holding a pure white dove in his hand. Then he let her

fly, for they had been told that whenever any living thing went between the rocks they were forced to come together, and then, according to their custom, they flew apart again.

The dove was swift in her flight; the wise goddess Minerva helped her, because she loved her; so swift was she that when the rocks dashed themselves one against another, they caught nothing but her tail! That was torn, certainly, but it did not matter, as the feathers soon grew again.

Then the rocks flew far apart, and the heroes rowed with might and main, so that they came safely through, before the rocks touched each other again. When this happened, they only broke away a tiny bit of the stern of the vessel; and that was all the harm they did.

The dove came back to the ship, and was quite friendly with the Argonauts. In after times Minerva rewarded her by placing her in the sky, where she is a beautiful constellation to this day.

VII.

When the Argonauts had safely passed through the Symplegades, they came to the mouth of the river which flows through Colchis. So they steered their ship up the stream; and when they arrived at the town, some stayed on board, but Jason and Pollux went straight to the palace of the King. This King's name was Æetes, and he had a daughter, called Medea.

Jason told King Æetes that Pelias had sent him to fetch the Golden Fleece, and asked his

permission to take it away. Now Æetes was most unwilling to lose the Fleece, but he could not very well refuse Jason all at once, because it had been decreed that he must one day give it up, if a man came from Greece to demand it. So he told him he should certainly have it, but he must first yoke the brazen bulls and plough a certain field with them; and after he had done this, he would have to sow dragons' teeth in the furrows.

These brazen bulls had been made by Vulcan; they moved and were alive just like other bulls, but they breathed fire out of their mouths and nostrils, and were much more fierce and strong than any ordinary bulls. Therefore the people of Colchis had built a stable for them of great stones and iron, and they were chained in their stalls with the strongest iron chains.

VIII.

Now the dragons' teeth were to be sown just as you would sow corn; but instead of corn, iron men grew out of the ground, with lances and swords, who immediately slew the men who had sown them. So the king hoped that if the bulls did not kill Jason these iron men would!

But Medea, the King's daughter, had seen Jason standing by her father, so strong and young and fair, and she loved him, and it grieved her to think that he must die. Now she was a witch-woman, and understood the uses of magic herbs; so she mounted into her chariot, which was drawn by winged snakes, and flew through the air, collecting plants from the highest mountains and from the

deepest valleys; also from the banks of many streams. Then she pressed the juice out of all these herbs and prepared a potion, which she gave to Jason.

He was not to drink the potion, but to rub his hands and face, his arms and legs with it, also his shield and sword and lance. It would render him for one single day stronger than any mortal man; fire could not burn, nor ice freeze him, and no weapon would be able to pierce his shield or his armour. But his own lance and sword would have the power of piercing iron as though it were butter.

IX.

So a day was fixed on which Jason was to harness the animals and sow the teeth. Early in the morning, before the sun rose, King Æetes went to the appointed field, with his daughter Medea, his ministers, his generals, his chamberlains and his courtiers. He had his throne placed where he could get the best possible view of the field; the rest of the people sat on benches, just as they do now when they go to a horse-race. They wanted to see what was going to happen, and the little boys climbed the trees in order to see over the heads of the grown-up people.

Jason rubbed himself and his armour all over with the juice Medea had given him, and came to the field. The stable in which the animals were was close by. The door was flung open and Jason entered bravely, because he had no fear. He unloosed the chains and seized the bulls, with one

"FIRE CAME OUT OF THEIR MOUTHS AND NOSTRILS."

hand on each horn, and so led them out. You may imagine how the animals roared, fire came out of their mouths and nostrils, and as much smoke as when a house is on fire, or when Vesuvius spits!

Then the wicked king was glad, but there were many among the crowd who pitied Jason, when they saw how fair and brave he was; and it grieved them when they thought he must be killed, for of course no one knew that Medea was helping him. Jason pressed so heavily on the animals that their heads touched the earth; then they kicked furiously with their hind-legs; but Jason was so strong that he forced them on to their knees.

X.

THE plough was made entirely of iron. Pollux brought it to the spot where Jason was holding the bulls, and threw the yoke over their necks and a chain round their horns. Jason was all this time holding them so firmly to the ground that they were unable to blow fire out of their mouths or nostrils. When all was ready and the bulls yoked, Pollux sprang quickly out of the way; Jason seized the chain in one hand and the handle of the plough in the other, and let go the horns.

The animals sprang up, meaning to gallop away; but Jason was holding the chain so tightly that they were obliged to go quietly and plough properly: they could not do otherwise. By this time the sun had risen, and before midday, Jason had ploughed the whole field! Then he unyoked the bulls and let them go free; they had been so terrified that they galloped away to the mountains without once looking back; there they would have soon set the forests on fire with their breath, had not Vulcan caught them — and — I don't know what he did with them!

This part of his task being finished, Jason went to King Æetes and asked for the teeth. You know that dragons and snakes have their mouths full of very small teeth, so Æetes gave him a helmet quite full of little teeth. Jason put his hand in and took out some; then he went up and down the field, sowing them in the furrows; afterwards he broke up all the great lumps of earth and levelled the ground, just as the gardener does after he has sown his seeds. When this was done, he went to lie

down and rested till the evening, for he was very tired after all his hard work.

XI.

Towards sunset he went back to the field, and behold, armed men were appearing out of every furrow. Those whose arms were free, but who could not move yet from the spot where they were growing, shook their spears and brandished their swords. Those whose feet were already disentangled from the ground, rushed madly at Jason.

Then he did what his friend Medea had told him, he threw a great stone in their midst. Directly the iron men saw this, they all ran towards this stone and each man seemed to want to get it for himself. So they all began to quarrel over it, and to fight with each other; as soon as any man succeeded in freeing his feet, he also ran to join the fray. So they killed each other, and in the meantime Jason went round the field and cut off the heads of all those who were just growing out of the earth the end of it was, the iron men were all slain. King Æetes was beside himself with rage and disappointment, but Medea and the heroes and all the people were glad.

On the following morning Jason once more went to the king and demanded the Fleece. He was told he could not have it just then, but must come again later on.

XII.

Now the Fleece was nailed to an oak tree, and

at its foot lay a dragon which never slept, and devoured every one who dared to touch the Fleece, except the king. This dragon was immortal, so it was no use trying to kill it, but fortunately it had a great liking for all sweet things; so Medea, who knew of a certain juice which had the power of sending the dragon to sleep, put a little into some honey-cakes.

These she gave to Jason, and when he went near the tree, he threw them to the dragon, who was stupid enough to eat them all up! Of course he fell fast asleep immediately. Jason stepped quietly over him, wrenched out the nails, took the Fleece down from the tree, threw his mantle over it, and carried it on board the good ship Argo. Medea went with them, for she was to become Jason's wife, and sail with him back to his home, in the pleasant land of Greece.

As for King Æetes, he thought the Argonauts would go back the same way they had come, so he sent out a number of ships with orders to seize them and bring them back; but they were wise enough to sail another way, by the great river, until they came to the ocean which flows round the world. They launched the Argo on this great sea, and sailed away and away for many a day, until at last they got back to Iolcus.

When Medea came to Thessaly with Jason, she made old Aeson young again; his white hair turned black, all the teeth he had lost came back again, he seemed as strong and young as he had ever been, and lived on happily for many years. Medea killed Pelias, and Aeson became king again.

THE PROWESS OF HERCULES.

I.

HERCULES was the son of Jupiter and of Alcmena; Amphitryon was the husband of Alcmena, and they lived in the land of Greece. Although Amphitryon was only Hercules' step-father, he loved him as if he had been his own son. Amphitryon and Alcmena had one son, whose name was Iphicles; so he was half-brother to Hercules.

Hercules and Iphicles did not lie in a cradle, but in a great brazen shield, in which their mother had made their bed, and when she wanted to put them to sleep, she used to rock them in this cradle. Hercules was never known to cry when he was a baby; but when he was quite young, he was not called Hercules, but Alcides.

Unfortunately his mother, Alcmena, had a very powerful enemy, Juno, and she wanted to have Hercules killed. Once, at midnight, when Amphitryon and Alcmena were fast asleep, the two boys as usual sleeping in the shield by their side, two great snakes crept in through a hole under the door and came close up to the shield. The snakes' eyes glowed like fire, and made the whole room as light as if there was a great fire in it. They raised their heads on the side where Hercules lay, meaning to creep into the cradle and bite him. But in doing this they must have shaken the shield, for Iphicles woke up and began to scream

with fright. This roused Alcmena, and when she saw the light in the room, she called her husband, Amphitryon; he sprang out of bed in a great hurry, and took down his sword from where it was hanging on a nail by the bed.

II.

Hercules was not a bit frightened when he saw the snakes: he did not cry out, as any other child would have done, but only laughed. Then he seized the snakes by the throat, one in each hand, and held them tight. In this way they could not bite him; they tried to wind their tails round him, but it was of no use, he had squeezed the life out of them with his baby hands. Of course when they were dead, their eyes could not glow any more, so the room was as dark as before and Amphitryon could see nothing. He called to the servants, and when they brought a light, Hercules showed him the two dead snakes and laughed loud, being very much pleased with himself.

Hercules was a very big boy for his age; he had a big appetite too, but he only cared for meat and bread, he never ate any sweet things. He learnt to read and write, also to ride, and to drive a chariot with two horses or with four. He could wrestle, he could hit the mark with his javelin, and he could box with the cestus, or heavy boxing gloves used in his time.

There was a wise Centaur, a kind of strange man with a horse's body and legs, named Chiron, who taught him the knowledge of the stars, and of all plants and herbs—he also instructed him

in the habits of the animals which lived in the glades and woods.

Hercules loved to listen, and he learnt quickly and well. He was both obedient and diligent, but he had one great fault: he had a very passionate temper, and whenever anything made him angry, he became quite mad for the time, and did many wrong things. He was always very sorry and wept bitterly afterwards when he thought of it, but then it was too late, the evil was done and could not be undone. He had a tutor named Linus, who taught him to play the guitar; one day, when Hercules had been careless and inattentive, Linus very properly thrashed him.

This made Hercules furious, he seized the guitar, and beat poor Linus so violently on the head with it, that he killed him.

III.

After this, Amphitryon would not keep him any longer in the house, but sent him to the mountain to live with his herdsmen. Cithæron was the name of the mountain; it is not far from Thebes, and was at that time covered with forests—on the lower slopes of the hill were meadows, and many cattle feeding on them. In the forests lived a fierce lion, who had killed many of the cattle and some of the herdsmen. Hercules the strong killed this savage beast with an iron club. As a reward for this brave deed, Amphitryon let him return to Thebes, the home he loved so well.

The Thebans were forced every year to send a

hundred oxen to the King of the Minyes. Now it did not please Hercules that his city should pay tribute to anyone; so when the king sent his heralds to demand the oxen, he cut off their ears and their noses and sent them back. After this the King of the Minyes came with a great army to fight against Thebes. It so happened that Creon, the King of Thebes was a coward; he had never had the courage to resist, and that is how it was that the tribute had been paid all these years. But now he made Hercules his general, which pleased and encouraged his soldiers.

Hercules' armour, which was of pure gold, was given to him by Minerva, Mercury gave him a sword, and Apollo a bow and arrows. He defeated the enemy and killed King Erginus; and the Minyes, whose city was Orchomenus, had now to send two hundred oxen every year to Thebes.

Creon gave Hercules his daughter Megara as a wife. She bore him three children, and for some years Hercules lived happily at Thebes. But Juno was still his enemy; she caused him to fall ill, and after this, he became mad, so mad that he took his own children for wild beasts and shot them all with his arrows. When he came to himself and saw what he had done, that he had killed the children he loved so well, he refused to be comforted, but fled away into the forest.

IV.

Now in those days, when people were uncertain what to do, they consulted the oracle and asked advice of Apollo. There were certain sacred

temples in Greece; in these temples lived a priest, or more often a priestess—those who came consulted her, and Apollo told her what answer to give. If any king thought of going to war, he would send to ask the advice of the oracle, and if Apollo said he would not be successful, he gave up the idea.

The oracle at Delphi was the most celebrated. The priestess, who was seated on a tripod, gave answers to all who came to her. If they obeyed the oracle and things went well with them, they used to bring presents to the temple, vessels of gold and silver and brass. The priestess was called the Pythia, and Delphi is in the land of Greece at the foot of Mount Parnassus.

Poor Hercules came to Delphi; he went into the temple, and told the Pythia of his sorrow, of how he had killed his children and could never be happy again. The Pythia told him he must go to the city of Tiryns and there serve the King Eurystheus, patiently performing whatever he was ordered to do. She told him that King Eurystheus would command him to perform twelve labours, and that these labours would be very difficult, and so dangerous that in any one of them he was likely to lose his life. But that if he were brave and patient, the gods would help him; that when he had completed his labours, he would be once more happy; and that, after his death, he would become a god.

This King Eurystheus was a bad man, and very cowardly; he did no good to anyone himself, and hated those who performed noble deeds. Hercules went patiently and obediently to Tiryns to the King's palace. He told Eurystheus that he had

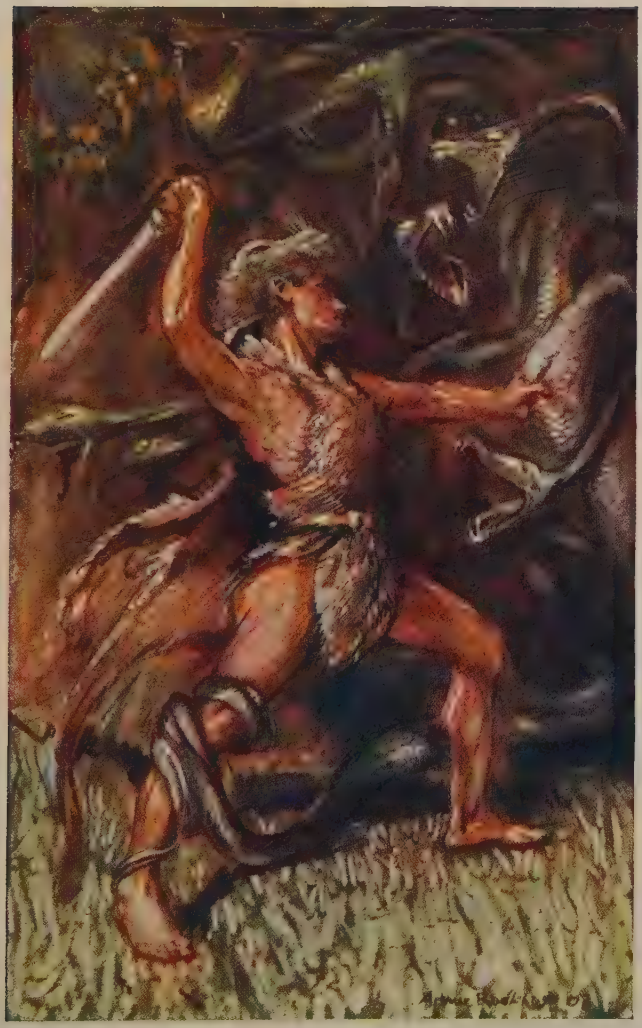
been commanded by the Pythia to serve him, and that he was ready to perform every labour imposed on him.

V.

King Eurystheus told Hercules he was to go to Nemea, and to kill the lion there. Now Nemea was a deeply wooded valley in his land lying at the foot of high mountains. In the forests lived a fierce lion, with so tough a hide that no weapon could wound him; when the herdsmen threw their spears at him, they fell off harmlessly, and the lion sprang out on the unfortunate men and killed them. Hercules went into the forest, and placed himself, as hunters always do, in such a position behind the trees that the beast should not be able to see him when he took aim.

The lion came raging through the forest; he had just devoured some cows, and his jaws and his mane were covered with blood which he was licking with his great tongue. When a lion roars in a forest, it sounds like thunder, and the very earth trembles. He lashed his own sides, and the trees in his path with his tail. Hercules shot, but the arrow glanced aside. Again he drew his bow, but still the arrow could not pierce the lion's skin, though it was sent with enough force to go through a man's armour, and the man too!

A lion always crouches to spring, with his breast almost touching the earth, and his tail between his legs. He can spring the length of a good-sized room. Hercules wound his mantle round his left arm to keep it out of his way, and took a great club in his right hand, which he had hewn



"Hercules seized her by the neck, out of which the nine heads grew."

from a tree in the forest: then he gave the lion a blow on the head with all his might. This did not kill him, however, but he seemed surprised and even frightened, and stood quite still. Then Hercules sprang on him, seized him by the neck with both arms, treading on his hind legs, and so strangled him. When the lion was quite dead, Hercules took off the skin and hung it round himself, and put the jaws on his head like a helmet, and the fore paws round his neck. He had broken his club on the lion's head, so he hewed himself another and a mightier one out of the forest. After this he was never seen without his club and the lion's skin.

VI.

When he returned to King Eurystheus with the news that the lion was slain, the King was very much afraid of him. So he caused a room to be built for himself underground, of some strong metal; in this he hid himself when Hercules appeared and talked to him through an iron grating. This time the hero was to go and kill the Hydra of Lerna. This Hydra was a great serpent, as long as a ship—she had nine heads, and lived in the marsh of Lerna. Hercules forthwith set out in a chariot for Lerna, his friend Iolăus holding the reins.

As soon as the Hydra saw Hercules, she crept away—but Hercules took his bow, wrapt his arrow in tow soaked in pitch and brimstone, and shot it into the hole in which she had hidden herself. This brought her out, and she rushed at Hercules. He seized her by the neck, out of which the nine heads

grew. Then she wound her long tail round one of his legs. Hercules struck at the heads, one after another, and cut them in two, but as soon as a head appeared to be destroyed in this way, two others would spring out in its place. Then a great crab, who was a friend of the Hydra, came out of the swamp and took hold of his foot, but Hercules soon crushed it with his other heel.

All this time he was hitting at the heads of the Hydra with the club, but new heads were constantly appearing, and it seemed as though he could never complete his task. I do not think he ever would have done so if it had not been for his friend Ioläus.

Ioläus cut down great trees; when he had done this, he laid the pieces together, and made a large fire, out of which he took burning logs. So as soon as Hercules had hit or cut off a head, he thrust the brand down into the root of the head, so that in the end all the roots were burned away, and the Hydra died. Then Hercules dipped the points of his arrows in the blood, for he knew that it was so poisonous that if it only touched the skin of a man or of an animal, they died. This was the second labour that Hercules did at Eurystheus' command, as Apollo had directed him.

VII.

Then Eurystheus gave him orders to catch the stag of Cerynia and to bring it to him alive. This stag had golden horns, and could run so swiftly that neither horse nor dog could overtake him. But Hercules was as fleet as he was strong, and

though he pursued the stag for a whole year, he caught him at last, and bore him on his shoulders to Tiryns. This was the third labour.

The next thing he had to do was to bring the wild boar of Erymanthus to Eurystheus.

Erymanthus is a mountain in Arcadia, where the boar lived and laid waste every corn-field or pleasure-garden round. The inhabitants of the country used to form bands and go against him with pikes and spears, but he overthrew them, and gored them to death with his great tusks.

Hercules started on his journey, but on the way he came to the cave of Pholus the Centaur, and it being towards evening, he begged a night's lodging. Now there were many Centaurs in these parts; they possessed a great cask of wine in common, but it was always kept in the cave of Pholus and they only drank from it, when they came together to feast. Besides this, Pholus had no other wine; so when Hercules had eaten his fill, and asked for wine, Pholus told him he dared not give it to him, because if he did venture to draw from the cask, the other Centaurs would assuredly kill him. Hercules did not believe this, and as he was thirsty, he took a pitcher and filled it himself from the cask.

Now this wine had been given to the Centaurs by Bacchus himself, and had a perfume like roses, so powerful that when it was drawn from the cask it could be smelt miles away. So all the Centaurs knew what had been done, and came hurrying from far and near to kill poor Pholus. Some tore down great pieces of rock from the mountain side, others rooted up pines and fir trees;

for Centaurs never fight with swords and lances, and very few of them had bows and arrows.

Hercules stood at the entrance of the cave, and threw burning wood at them; then he drew his bow and shot with the arrows which had been dipped in the blood of the Hydra. All those he hit died directly, just as though they had been bitten by the Hydra herself. Seeing this, and fearing for themselves, the rest fled.

Pholus was much surprised to see that one small arrow should be able to kill such a great creature as a Centaur, and out of curiosity, he pulled out an arrow from one of the dead bodies in order to examine it; but being careless, he let it fall out of his hand; it pierced his foot, and he too died immediately. All this time Hercules had been pursuing the flying Centaurs; it grieved him much when he saw the dead body of Pholus, for he knew that he was to blame for having opened the cask against his wish. He burned the body and buried the ashes with care.

VIII.

Then Hercules went on to Erymanthus. He expected that the boar would attack him as it had attacked all other hunters, and that then he could lay hold of it. But instead of this, the boar was afraid of him, and ran away! After him ran Hercules, pursuing him for many a weary mile, until at last, in his terror, the boar jumped headlong into a deep hollow, which was at the time full of snow, for much snow lies on the mountains of Arcadia, just as it does on the Alps. Hercules had made a noose with a strong rope, and

when the boar was struggling to get out of the ravine, he threw this round him, and in this way he managed to drag him up to the spot where he was standing himself. Then he threw the animal over his shoulders, and so carried him to Tiryns. The boar lay on his back with his legs in the air, and though he kicked and grunted all the way, he could not free himself. This was the fourth labour.

Then Eurystheus sent him to clean out the Augean stables, and said it must be done in one single day.

Augeas was the King of Elis. He possessed three thousand head of cattle, which he kept in one enormous stable; it was a sort of big yard, and round this yard was a wall with arches, through which the cattle were driven every night and morning. King Augeas must have had very lazy servants, for the stables were never cleared out, and the heap of rubbish and dirt had grown so high that now the cattle could not make their way in through the arches. It seemed as though it would take a year to clear it away.

Hercules dug a deep ditch as far as the yard, and into this he turned the course of two rivers which flowed down from high up in the mountains and their current was very strong. He made a great hole in the wall and let the water rush into the yard. Then he made another hole on the opposite side, and let it rush out again, carrying all the dirt with it. So the whole yard was made clean in a day, just as clean as a street pavement, when a storm of rain has washed all the mud and litter away.

This was his fifth labour. Augeas had promised Hercules that if he cleaned the stable as he said he would, in a single day, he would give him the tenth part of the cattle. But he failed to keep his word, and he was punished for it as he deserved, for after Hercules had ended all his labours, he came back, made war on him, and killed him.

IX.

The sixth labour was to drive the birds from the marsh of Stymphalus. These birds, like the Harpies, had iron beaks and claws, with which they often killed both men and animals; then they would devour them, and after their feast fly back to their marsh. This marsh was something like a great lake, only there were so many trees growing out of it that from a distance you might take it for a forest. The water was not deep enough for a boat to sail on it—in fact, it was not water at all, but thick slime; no one could walk on it, for as soon as you put your foot on, you sank in the mud. So even Hercules would not have been able to drive away these evil birds had not Vulcan helped him by making a great brass rattle, which he gave him.

Then Hercules went to a mountain near the marsh, and shook this rattle with all his might. It made such a frightful noise that the birds were terrified and flew away. Hercules took his bow and shot as many as he could; the rest escaped over the mountains and were never seen any more. This was the sixth labour.

Now Eurystheus ordered him to fetch the

terrible bull of Crete. Hercules took a ship and sailed to the island of Crete; there he asked Minos, the King, to allow him to catch the bull. Minos was only too glad to grant him permission, for the bull was laying waste the whole land, and no man was able to subdue him. But Hercules took him by the horns and dragged him on board his ship and so back to Peloponnesus and to Tiryns. But as Neptune forbade him to slay the bull, it got loose again, and did much damage in the land of Greece, till Theseus at last killed it. This was the seventh labour.

X.

For the eighth he was to bring the horses of Diomedes to Tiryns. Again Hercules took a ship, for this time he had to go to Thrace. These horses were like savage beasts, and fed on human flesh, and Diomedes was cruel enough to have all the strangers who came to his country thrown to them. The poor people were at once torn to pieces and eaten up by the horses.

Diomedes refused to give up the animals, so Hercules killed him and allowed him to be devoured by his own horses, a fate he richly deserved. Then the horses were put on board Hercules' ship, and he sailed back to Tiryns. But when he arrived there, Eurystheus was so frightened at the sight of them, that he let them escape! However, they tore wildly away and into the dense forests, where they were slain by wild beasts. So the land was rid of these evil creatures. This was the eighth labour.

The Amazons were a strange people, consisting only of women. They went to war riding on horseback, and were in every way just like men, and as brave as heroes. Their queen, Hippolyta, possessed a costly girdle of gold and precious stones, which Mars had given to her. Now Eurystheus had heard of this wonderful girdle, and was anxious to get it for his daughter Admeta; so he sent Hercules to fetch it. Hercules let it be known throughout all the land of Greece that he was going to fight the Amazons, and invited all brave men in search of adventure to go with him.

Many joined him, and together they took ship and sailed to the country of the Amazons. As soon as they had landed, he announced his mission to the queen. Hippolyta knew that Hercules was bound to obey Eurystheus, according to Apollo's command, so she would have let him take the girdle, but the other Amazons would not hear of it, and attacked Hercules and his companions.

There was a great battle, which has been often depicted by ancient sculptors. You always see the Amazons fighting on horseback, and Hercules and his friends on foot. But in the end they were put to flight, and Hercules captured Hippolyta; she was not hurt, however, and he set her free as soon as he became possessed of her girdle.

XI.

THEN he turned his ship about, and sailed back towards Greece, but he cast anchor at Troy and

went ashore and up into the city. At that time there was a rich and powerful king of Troy called Laomedon, but he had offended the gods, Apollo and Neptune, who had brought great misery on his land.

It had happened in this way. Troy was a great city, but it had no walls. One day Apollo and Neptune came to Laomedon and told him that if he would give them due reward for their work, they would build walls to his town such as no enemy could destroy. King Laomedon, thinking they were mortals, came to terms with them, and it was agreed that they should begin the walls at once.

Apollo and Neptune built great high walls with huge pieces of rock. When they had finished, Laomedon was mean enough to refuse to pay. For he still had no idea who they were; he thought they were some of the heroes, and he knew no enemy would be able to take the walls away.

To punish him, Neptune sent a monster, which rose every day out of the sea, and destroyed men and animals, or anything that came in his way. So the people were in a state of panic, and nobody dared to go outside the walls of the town, and as the fields went uncultivated, famine and great distress came on all the land; the people even wanted to slay their king, to whom they rightly attributed all their misfortunes. Laomedon sent to consult the oracle, asking what he could do to get rid of the sea-monster. The oracle commanded him to chain his daughter Hesione to a rock on the sea-shore; the monster would devour her

and afterwards depart, and the land would have rest.

Hercules told the King not to fear for his daughter, that he would fight the monster; but if he killed it, Laomedon must make him a present of the horse which Jupiter had given him, and which was the finest horse in the world. Laomedon gladly agreed to this. Then Hercules sent everybody into the town, and stayed himself with Hesione. When the monster came up out of the sea, ready to tear Hesione to pieces, Hercules attacked and killed it; then he took Hesione back to her father, safe and sound.

Again Laomedon broke his promise and did not give up the horse. Hercules was very angry, but he would not then make war on him, not having yet finished the labours imposed on him by the gods. So he sent word to Laomedon that he would punish him as he deserved later on, and then sailed back to Tiryns to give the girdle to Eurystheus. This was the ninth labour.

XII.

On the coast of Spain, near the spot where now stands the great city of Cadiz, there is an island. In those days, men called the isle Erythia; there was no town, only fair meadows, and fine pasture land, where the cattle of King Geryon fed. These cattle were the finest ever seen, and all of one colour. There was always a dog to guard them. This dog was called Orthus; he had two heads, and was so strong that he could easily fight with two wolves at once and kill them both. King

Geryon was no ordinary man; he was like three giants in one, for he had three heads, and six arms and legs. It would not be easy to get possession of his cattle, even if Hercules succeeded in slaying the dog. So Eurystheus thought this time Hercules must certainly perish in the attempt, and this was why he sent him on his adventure. Hercules started off alone, taking his bow and his club.

His way lay through the desert of Libya, where the sun shines fierce and strong; Hercules was angry with the sun-god, who was driving his chariot over the land, and told him to stand aside and not let his burning rays fall on him! The sun-god, whom the Greeks called Helios, only laughed, and said the road belonged to him. This made Hercules furious, and he drew his bow in order to shoot at Helios; but as at that time he was only a mortal man, he would not have been able to hurt Helios, who was immortal.

Helios admired his courage, and told him he must be content to submit, but that he would lend him his own golden ship in which to cross the sea to Erythia. For the Mediterranean sea lies between Africa and Europe, and the two great cliffs which stand on either bank are called the Pillars of Hercules to this day. When Hercules set sail on this sea, the god Oceanus wished to prove his courage, so he caused a great storm to arise; Hercules merely drew his bow, which so frightened Oceanus that he calmed the waves again.

Hercules landed on the island of Erythia; he killed the dog Orthus, and the herdsman

Eurytion as well. This man had certainly deserved his fate, for he suffered the cattle to devour men, just as the horses of Diomedes had been in the habit of doing! Then Hercules drove the cattle away. King Geryon heard what was going on, and came to fight Hercules, but he had better have left it alone, for Hercules shot him dead

XIII.

Hercules drove the cattle through Spain, and through Liguria, and there the people came together in thousands trying to capture the cattle, and take them away from Hercules. Whenever they came near enough he killed them with his club, but when they kept at a distance, only shooting their arrows and throwing stones at him, he was only able to use his arrows, and as his enemies were so numerous, these were soon all gone. He must now have been killed had not his father, Jupiter, come to his assistance. He rained great stones from Heaven, which killed many of the Ligurians, and Hercules was able to pick up these stones and hurl them at his foes. You can see the field to this day, full of stones; it is in Provence, in France, and is called Crau.

Then Hercules drove the cattle over the Alps, making a path for them as he went through the ice and snow; and so they came to the river Tiber, to the spot where the city of Rome now stands.

In those days there was no town there, and under Mount Aventinus there was a cave in which dwelt a wicked giant named Cacus. He used to breathe fire out of his mouth and nose, and

tormented everybody who lived anywhere near. He came out in the night and stole some of Hercules' best cattle, which he drove to his cave; but in order that Hercules should not know they were there, he dragged them in backwards by their tails, so that it looked as if they had been driven out instead of in!

Hercules looked everywhere for his lost cattle, but finding no trace of them, he was obliged to leave them and continue his way with the rest. As he was driving them along at the foot of Mt. Aventinus, on a road which is now one of the principal streets in Rome, one of the herd lowed. Immediately the cattle that were shut up in the cave recognised the sound and answered it. Hercules tore away the great blocks of stone with which Cacus had closed up the mouth of the cave; then, as the giant could not escape, he tried to kill Hercules with his fiery breath; however, this did not at all frighten Hercules, who soon beat him to death with his club.

At last he reached the isthmus and was not far from Tiryns. In a very narrow pass between the mountains and the sea, he was attacked by a giant called Alcyoneus, who hurled a huge rock at him; it was so heavy that it would have needed twenty-four buffaloes to drag it. Happily, Hercules was on his guard; he caught the rock on his club, then he let it fall harmlessly to the ground, where it lies to this day. The next day he arrived at Tiryns and presented the red cattle to Eurystheus. This was the tenth labour, and a very troublesome one it had been to Hercules.

XIV.

THE next thing Eurystheus wanted was the golden apples of the Hesperides. When Juno married Jupiter, she gave him as a wedding gift some golden apples. These he planted in the garden of the nymphs known as the Hesperides. They grew into trees, which in time bore more apples of the same kind. Naturally many were tempted to try to steal this golden fruit, so the Hesperides had to guard their garden very carefully, and for this purpose they kept a great dragon with a hundred heads.

Now Hercules had no idea in which direction to look for this garden, and it was many days before he could find out. Then he set out, and on his way he met Antæus, who was the son of the Earth, and extraordinarily strong. He wrestled with everyone he came across, and always prevailed; for if any man were strong enough to be able to throw him, directly he touched the ground he sprang up again, and each time he was stronger than before. This was because the Earth was his mother. When Hercules noticed this, he no longer tried to throw him down, but lifted him up as high as he could, so that not even his feet could touch the ground, and pressed him so tightly between his mighty arms that he squeezed all the breath out of him.

After this adventure he came to Egypt, where Busiris was king; this monarch used to sacrifice all strangers who landed in his country to his gods. Hercules allowed them to bind his hands, and to put salt and meal on his head as is done

to animals who are led to slaughter. But when he was laid on the altar, and the priest lifted his knife to slay him, he sprang up, snapped his bonds, and killed both the priests and the cruel king.

As Hercules was so big and strong, you will not be surprised to hear that he had a very big appetite. One day, when he was feeling more than usually hungry, he met a peasant who had yoked two oxen, and was ploughing with them. Hercules asked the man to give him something to eat; the man refused; this angered Hercules, so he unyoked the oxen, slaughtered one of them, broke the plough into a hundred pieces, then made a fire with the wood, roasted the bullock, and ate the whole of it!

XV.

After this, he came to the Caucasus, a lofty mountain range in the far east. On a steep mountain side, so high that none could reach it, Jupiter had chained Prometheus; every day an eagle flew to the spot and tormented him, pecking his side with its strong beak. Hercules shot the eagle, and pleaded with his father, Jupiter, for Prometheus, begging him to set him free. Jupiter consented, and Prometheus went back to live with the other gods on Olympus.

At last, after many weary days of journeying over sea and land, Hercules came to Atlas, who stands ever on the edge of the world, holding the sky on his shoulders; if he left it for one moment it would fall down on to the earth. Atlas' brother was the father of the Hesperides,

and Hercules begged him to persuade his nieces to let him have a few of their apples, for, though he was not afraid of the dragon, he did not wish to have to take the apples by force from the nymphs. So Atlas went to the garden, and whilst he was away, Hercules bore the weight of the sky on his shoulders.

The Hesperides gave their uncle three apples which they said he might give to Hercules, if he would first make him promise to send them back. Everyone knew that he always kept his word. When Atlas came back, he was not at all anxious to take up his burden again: he thought that as Hercules was so strong, he might as well go on holding up the sky; but when Hercules threatened to let it fall, Atlas was obliged to take it from him and to give him the apples. He carried them to Tiryns, but told Eurystheus of his promise. The king would much have liked to keep them, but he knew well that if he did, Hercules would be allowed by the father of gods and men to punish him; so very unwillingly he gave them back, and Hercules took them to Minerva, who undertook to send them back to the Hesperides. This was the eleventh labour.

There was yet one more: when that was accomplished Hercules would be free, and no longer bound to obey Eurystheus. He was now ordered to bring the dog Cerberus up from the underworld.

Hercules went to Taenarus, which is a lofty promontory in Greece; amongst the rocks are wide clefts and caves through which is the passage to the underworld. He went down and down

until he came to the river Styx, which flowed round these gloomy regions. Here Pluto reigns.

There was no bridge over this river, but Charon was ferryman, and took all who wished to cross in his boat, but he said Hercules was far too big and heavy for the boat to carry him.

But the gods must be obeyed; Mercury went with him to show him the way. When they reached the other side, the head of Medusa the Gorgon appeared to Hercules. This terrible head had the power of turning anything that feared it into stone; but Hercules feared nothing, and when he lifted his sword, she fled. Every mortal who had dared to descend to the underworld before this had been torn to pieces by Cerberus, but as soon as the dog saw Hercules, he howled and crept for safety under Pluto's throne.

XVI.

HERCULES desired to offer a sacrifice to the gods; so, as Pluto had a fine herd of cattle, he took one bullock, meaning to slaughter it. The herdsman, Menotias, seeing this, came up in a great hurry and would have attacked him, had not Hercules laid hold of him; he was treating him rather roughly, and would have broken every bone in his body, if Proserpine, Pluto's queen, had not begged him to spare his life. He was greeted very kindly by both the king and queen; they said he was quite at liberty to take Cerberus, if he could compel the dog to go with him and would promise to send him back.

Now Cerberus was as big as an elephant; he

had three heads, and round each was a mane of snakes, and his tail was a huge serpent. Hercules was wearing the armour which Vulcan had made for him; he wound his lion's skin tightly round his body, then he seized Cerberus, and dragged him away by main force. The serpent which was the tail bit him all the time, but he did not loosen his hold of the dog until he had reached the upper world again.

When Cerberus saw the light of day, it seemed to madden him, so that he foamed at the mouth, and wherever the foam fell there grew evil weeds, so poisonous that all who ate thereof died. At the sight of Cerberus there was a panic in the land; people fled in all directions, and Eurystheus hid himself. So they were all glad when Hercules took the dog back and gave him into the charge of Charon, who took him to Pluto and Proserpine. Thus ended the twelfth and last labour, and at last Hercules was free.

But it was not the will of his father Jupiter that he should live simply to please himself and take his ease. He had to make use of the great strength that had been given to him to succour the distressed and to punish those who did wrong. So he would have to labour all the days of his life on earth, and above all he must control his own passionate temper; if he failed in this, he would have to bear the punishment himself, as he had done before in the long years in which he had been subject to Eurystheus. But if he continued faithful to the end, Jupiter would take him up to heaven and reward him a hundredfold for all that he had endured on the earth.

"HE DID NOT LOOSEN HIS HOLD OF THE DOG UNTIL HE HAD REACHED THE UPPER WORLD" (*p.* 44).

Hercules could very well have revenged himself on Eurystheus for all the injuries he had done him; but he knew that his servitude had been imposed on him as a punishment, so he left Tiryns without doing him any harm.

XVII.

On the island of Eubœa was a town called Œchalia. The king of this town was Eurytus; he was a great marksman, and his sons shot with their bows and arrows as well as he did himself. He had proclaimed throughout the land of Greece

that no one should marry his daughter Iole save one who could hit the mark with his arrow at a greater distance than himself or his sons. Now as Iole was very fair to look upon, many suitors had come to Œchalia to try their luck, but none had been able to beat Eurytus and his sons in the contest.

Then came Hercules and shot better than any of them; but Eurytus did not keep his word, and Iole was not given to Hercules as a wife. This made him very angry, but he controlled his anger and departed, going now to Thessaly.

Admetus, king of Pheræ, in Thessaly, was an old ally of Hercules, who went to his house to crave his hospitality. But when he entered the house, he found much distress and many were in tears, for it appeared that the king had been sick unto death, and must have died had not his wife Alcestis, by reason of her great love, begged this favour of the gods, that she might die in his stead. So she had died, and Admetus recovered. But when he was well enough to be told what had happened—that his wife had given her life for his—he was sore distressed, and would rather have died himself, if only Alcestis could come to life again.

Fortunately Hercules arrived before the body had been burnt: so he descended with all haste into the underworld, and besought Pluto to give back the soul of Alcestis. Pluto granted his prayers; so the soul of Alcestis returned to her body, which became warm and breathed again. Alcestis lived long with her husband Admetus, and they were both grateful to Hercules, and

looked upon him as their greatest benefactor as long as they lived. If Pluto had not given up the soul of Alcestis at his request, Hercules would have used force against him, though even the gods themselves feared Pluto.

XVIII.

Soon after this adventure, Iphytus, one of the sons of Eurytus, came to beg Hercules to help him search for the cattle which the cunning robber, Autolycus, had stolen from the king his father.

Autolycus had the power of changing anything he stole into a different shape, so that even the owners could not recognise their possessions when they saw them again. Hercules believed this was only a device of Eurytus to entice him back to Eubœa, and it angered him to think that Eurytus should have the insolence to expect him to take any trouble on his account. Unfortunately he allowed his passion to get the better of him; he took Iphytus up in his mighty arms, and threw him with such force over the city wall that he was killed on the spot.

Then Jupiter's wrath was kindled against his son because he had once again forgotten that he must curb his temper, and to make use of his great strength only to help all who needed it. So he punished him by sending him a fever, and in his fever he became mad. Therefore he went to Delphi to ask the oracle what he could do to be cured of this grievous sickness. He could get no answer from Apollo, so Hercules took away the tripod on which the priestess always sat when

she was delivering the oracle, and tried to destroy the temple. Then Apollo sprang out from the inner part, and drew his bow in order to shoot Hercules, but Jupiter caused his lightning to strike the ground between the two, and commanded Apollo to speak through the oracle. And this was what he said: If Hercules would consent to sell himself as a slave for three years, he would then recover his health.

This seemed very hard to Hercules, but again he was obedient to the decree, and allowed himself to be sold to Omphale, Queen of Lydia, who laughed at him and made him wear women's clothes and spin with her maidens. His lion's skin she took for herself! However, she was not as cruel as Eurystheus, and imposed no such terrible labours on him.

When the three years were passed, Hercules was once more free. He went back to Greece, and assembled the heroes and many other warriors in order to make war on King Laomedon, whom he had long ago promised to punish. He could not destroy the walls of the town, because they had been built by Apollo and Neptune, but he and his companions scaled them with ladders. Laomedon was killed, and Hercules gave his daughter Hesione to his friend Telamon, who had first entered the town with him. Hercules did not destroy the town of Troy, but made one of Laomedon's sons king. His name was Priam, and he was the father of Paris, who stole Helen, fairest of women, and of Hector, who defended Troy when Agamemnon and Menelaus led the Greeks in battle against the city.

XIX.

After this, Minerva called Hercules to Phlegra, the fair land near Naples, to the north of Vesuvius. At that time it was inhabited by giants who had defied the gods and were now waging war against them; Hercules was wanted to fight on the side of the gods. At last the gods won, and Jupiter threw the island of Sicily on their king, Typhoeus, so that he was buried under it—and the Greeks say that when he tries to raise himself and to throw off the weight which always keeps him down, this causes the earthquakes so often felt in Italy.

When this war was over, Hercules went back to Greece and to Œneus, the King of Calydon. This king had a beautiful daughter, called Deianira, whom Hercules desired to wed, and Œneus was quite willing to have him for a son-in-law; but the river god, Achelous, wanted to marry her too, so Hercules had to fight with him. Achelous turned himself into a terrible dragon, whom Hercules seized by the throat. Then he changed into a monster bull, which tried to gore Hercules, but he laid hold of his horns and broke one off, Then Achelous gave up the contest, and begged Hercules to do him no more damage. So Hercules married Deianira, and took her away.

As he no longer needed the club he had hewn for himself when he fought the lion, he had buried it in the earth as a sacrifice to the gods; it took root, bore branches and leaves, and the tree into which it grew was still living in the time of Marcus Aurelius, Emperor of Rome.

Hercules wished to take Deianira to the town of Trachin; the way lay across a broad river, much swollen now after heavy rains, and there was no boat to be had. Hercules himself waded across, but a centaur of the name of Nessus, who lived near the river, was in the habit of conveying people over on his back for payment, and he now offered to carry Deianira safely to the other side. He meant, however, to steal her away from Hercules, and gallop off with her to the mountains.

When Hercules saw what he was doing, he shot an arrow after him, one of those which had been dipped in the blood of the Hydra. This killed the centaur; but as he was dying he told Deianira to take some of the blood from his wound, and that if at any future time she should think she had reason to doubt her husband's love, she had only to pour a few drops of this blood on some garment worn by Hercules, and she would regain all his affection. He was wicked enough to do this in order to revenge himself; unluckily Deianira believed him, she took the blood and said nothing to Hercules about it.

XX.

Parnassus and Œta are two lofty peaks in a chain of mountains, with many valleys and much pasture land on the lower slopes. In these mountains lived the Dorians, a tribe not numerous but brave and hardy; they had been conquered by a much more powerful tribe, the Dryopes. Aegimius, king of the Dorians, had heard that Hercules was ever ready to help the weak against the strong and to succour those who

"SHE TOOK THE BLOOD" (*p.* 50).

suffered wrong—so he sent to implore his assistance against the Dryopes. Hercules granted it willingly, and conquered the Dryopes so thoroughly that hereafter the Dorians could rest in peace among their mountains. Aegimius was old, and having no children, he made Hercules his heir, and said he should be King of the Dorians after his death, and his descendants after him. This pleased his people, and in after times, under the Heraclidæ, as the descendants of Hercules were called, instead of being few in numbers and weak, they became a great and powerful people.

After this war, Hercules went to Trachin, and lived there with Deianira and his children with

the good old King Ceyx, and rested from his labours. Then he caused it to be proclaimed throughout all the land of Greece that he was going to war; and all brave men from all parts of the country came together to fight under his banner. When his army was assembled, he took it over the sea, which is very narrow just here, to the Isle of Eubœa, to wage war against Eurytus.

Eurytus and his sons fell in battle, Œchalia was conquered, and Hercules took Iole, with his other captives, to Trachin. He intended to give her to wife to his eldest son Hyllus; but mischief-making people told Deianira that he meant to put her away and marry Iole himself. Poor Deianira was greatly distressed, as you may imagine.

XXI.

Hercules did not go straight to Trachin, because he desired to sacrifice to the gods in honour of his victory, at the foot of Mount Œta. Those who did sacrifice were always clad in pure white garments, and as those of Hercules were soiled with battle and bloody, he sent his servant to his house to bring him fresh clothing.

Then Deianira bethought her of the false counsel of Nessus: she dropped some of the blood on a shirt and gave it to the man; he took it to his master, and Hercules clothed himself in it. As soon as the shirt became heated by the warmth of the body, it clung to the skin, and the poison burnt into his flesh: he tried to tear it off, but it clung too fast, and when the poison entered into his blood, he knew that

his hour was come and that he must die. Therefore he hewed down the trees that grew around, and laid them one upon another; then he placed himself on the funeral pyre, and begged his friends to set it alight.

There was a youth with him, named Philoctetes, the son of one of his early friends. He loved Hercules; so he had always been obedient to his commands. Hercules now gave him his bow and arrows, and told him to set a light to the pile; the youth obeyed him, as he had ever done, though it grieved him sorely. But now all pain and suffering were over for Hercules, for as soon as the pyre began to burn a great storm arose, and a cloud descended from heaven with mighty thundering and lightning on to the pyre, and bore the soul of Hercules to Olympus. His body was burnt on the funeral pyre he had made for himself.

When his soul reached Olympus, Jupiter changed him into a god, and he and all the other gods, who had always loved him, greeted him kindly and embraced him. Even Juno, who had been his enemy, was friendly to him, and gave him her beautiful daughter Hebe for his wife. And his name was held in honour to all time in those lands where he had done noble deeds; he had earned lasting gratitude by clearing the country of monsters and tyrants. Thousands of years have passed since the days of Hercules, but our love for him will never die; while for Eurystheus we have only hatred and contempt.

THE HERACLIDÆ.

I.

EURYSTHEUS was wicked enough to persecute the children of Hercules after his death; he would have slain them if he could, for he knew that one day they would punish him for all the harm he had done their father, who had not thought it his duty to revenge himself. The old king, Aegimius, was unable to protect them, and they fled to Athens.

Then Eurystheus took a great army to fight against Athens, and demanded that the Heraclidæ should be given up to him; but the Athenians and their king, Theseus, were too generous to do anything of the sort; indeed, they would rather risk all they had, they said, than act in such a way.

Now Ioläus, the friend of Hercules, was dead; but he heard in the underworld that his friend's children were in great danger; so he besought Pluto to let him live again, if only for one day, that he might ascend once more to the world of men in order to defend them. Pluto granted his prayer; in the great battle that followed the Athenians were victorious. Ioläus himself slew Eurystheus; then he went back, contented, to the underworld. The Heraclidæ returned to King Aegimius and after his death Hyllus became King of the Dorians in his stead.

As the ancestors of Alcmena had been kings of Argos, Hercules, and after him his sons and

descendants, had the right to reign over that country. After the death of Eurystheus, Hyllus and his Dorians attempted to conquer the whole of the Peloponnesus, but he did not succeed. He lost his life in a duel with King Echmus of Arcadia, and his son Cleodæus was forced to take the Dorians back to their own land, amongst the mountains of Parnassus.

The Peloponnesus is a peninsula—that is to say, it has sea all round it, except in one place, where a narrow neck of land joins it to the other part of Greece. This neck of land is called the Isthmus, and is really one long mountain; there is no pass over the mountain, but the way lies at the foot, along the sea-shore, and is so narrow that a very few soldiers can defend it, and if others are placed on the hill to throw stones down, no one can pass along the narrow road. The Peloponnesus is a mountainous land; on many of the hills snow lies all the year round, for they are nearly as lofty as the Alps; in other parts are vast forests and green meadows. The valleys are very fertile; much corn is grown there, and olives and grapes also.

II.

After the death of Hyllus, his son Cleodæus again wished to attack the Peloponnesians, but he found it impossible to cross the Isthmus, nor could his son Aristomachus after him. This Aristomachus had three sons, Temenus, Cresphontes, and Aristodemus. These did not lose heart because their father and great grandfathers had failed; they remembered

their great ancestor, Hercules, and how he had had to endure much pain and trouble in order to gain fame and honour at the last.

So they again gathered an army together; and the Dorians were ready enough to join the expedition, for their own country was small and barren, and if their kings could conquer the Peloponnesus, their followers would assuredly obtain a fair land and much riches.

But before they started, the three Heraclidæ consulted the Oracle at Delphi, and asked what they could do in order to be more successful than those who had gone before them. Apollo answered that they must make a man with three eyes their leader. This seemed very strange and they they feared they should never find such a man.

However, as they were leaving the city of Delphi, they met Oxylus of Ætolia; he had fled from his own land because he had, by mischance, killed a man when throwing a quoit. Now it happened that this Oxylus had only one eye—he had lost the other, which had been pierced by an arrow—and he was riding on a mule with two eyes! Then the Heraclidæ guessed that the Oracle meant them to make this man their leader, and so it was. For Oxylus told them their forefathers had made a mistake in attacking the Isthmus, they ought to have built ships and gone by sea; then the kings of Peloponnesus would not have known where they meant to land, or have been prepared to meet them.

So the Heraclidæ and their whole army

"OXYLUS HAD ONLY ONE EYE" (*p.* 56).

went down to the sea-shore which lies opposite the Peloponnesus. There are many trees on the mountains near; these they cut down and built boats with them. The largest trunks they merely needed to hollow out, and as the sea was very narrow at that place, they could cross in these. The spot was afterwards called Naupactus, and now we call it Lepanto; and here 300 years ago and more the Christians won a great sea-fight over the Turks, who had intended to have attacked and conquered Italy, had not their fleet been totally destroyed.

The kings and prophets of the Peloponnesus could not agree at this time, for the Ionians,

who lived on the opposite coasts to Naupactus, and the Arcadians, who inhabited the centre of the Peninsula, made peace with the Heraclidæ and Dorians, and let them march through their land; and this was very unwise of them and brought them much trouble, as you will see.

III.

MENELAUS had died without leaving a son to inherit his kingdom of Sparta, for the fair Helen had only had one daughter, Hermione; Megapenthes was the son of a bondwoman. Agamemnon was king of Mycenæ, and had led the Grecian host against Troy; he had only one son, named Orestes, who was still very young when his father, on his return from Troy, was murdered by his wicked wife, Clytemnestra, and by Ægisthus. Ægisthus would have had the boy killed as well, but his sister Electra, who was older than he, hid him at the time, and afterwards contrived to send him away out of the country with a faithful servant, to an ally of his father, named Strophius.

No one was told who the boy was, for it was feared that Ægisthus would send and have him murdered. Strophius had a brave son, Pylades, with whom Orestes was brought up. The boys learnt everything together, and loved each other with a love greater than that of brothers; they were never happy apart, and this affection only increased as the years went on. And so it is that even in our days, when two love each other so well that they would lay

down their lives for one another, we say they are such friends as were Orestes and Pylades.

Both youths were strong and brave and fair to look upon. As soon as Orestes was grown up, he went to Delphi to consult the Oracle as to how he was to recover his father's kingdom. The Oracle said he must avenge the death of his father, but that it must be done by craft, not by force: that meant he was not to lead an army against Ægisthus and Clytemnestra. So he set out for Mycenæ, taking with him his faithful friend and the same old servant who had brought him to Strophius as a boy.

Orestes and Pylades hid themselves in a tomb outside the city walls, whilst this old man went as a stranger into the Palace, and related to Clytemnestra and to Ægisthus how Orestes had been thrown from his chariot during a race at Delphi and killed. They believed the story, and Clytemnestra was so unnatural as to rejoice, for her conscience told her that she well deserved to be slain by her son as his father's murderess. She and Ægisthus therefore now felt safe that their evil deed would never be avenged, and to celebrate their deliverance they made a great feast. Orestes and Pylades now begged leave to see the king and queen, in order to tell them more of the manner in which Orestes had lost his life. This was granted, and as soon as they were admitted, they stabbed them both.

IV.

But though Orestes had slain his mother at the

command of Apollo, even he and Minerva were not able to protect the young man from the Eumenides or Furies. These were terrible goddesses who pursued those who had slain parents, brothers, or those to whom they owed hospitality, with serpents and flaming torches. When Orestes saw them, all his courage left him and he fled before them. They followed him and allowed him no peace day or night.

All this time Electra and his friend Pylades never left him, but shared all his trouble. At last he took refuge in the Temple of Minerva, and there the goddess would not suffer the Furies to torment him. She and Apollo persuaded them to submit the matter to the judges of the Areopagus, and to let them decide whether Orestes had done rightly or wrongly in slaying his mother; seeing that he had done it by command of Apollo.

There were twelve judges; before them stood an urn, and in the hand of each judge were two stones—one white, the other black. He who considered the accused guilty, threw in the black stone; he who thought him innocent, the white one. It happened that six judges declared him innocent, in that he had obeyed the gods and rightly avenged his father, and six voted him guilty, having killed his mother. But when the urn was overturned and the pebbles counted, Minerva and Apollo had worked a miracle, for there were seven white ones, one more than had been thrown in! So Orestes was free; the terrible Furies could no longer pursue or harm him.

After this, Orestes and Pylades wandered long in many lands, that Orestes might be purified

from all stain. Pylades never left him, but Electra went back to Argos.

Now it came to pass that after many days they came to the coast of Tauris, a peninsula in the great inland sea we call the Black Sea, but which in those days was known as the Euxine. It is wide, and on one coast the land belongs to Europe, on the other to Asia. At Constantinople, a piece of water something like a very broad river leads into another much smaller sea, then called the Propontis; whence yet another strait leads into the Mediterranean Sea, all round which are many countries which you have often heard of: in Europe, Greece, Italy, France and Spain; in Asia, Syria and Anatolia, and in Africa, Egypt and Libya.

The Tauric Peninsula is called the Chersonese, and is a fair and fruitful land, but in olden times the inhabitants were a cruel and savage people, who sacrificed to their goddess, Diana, all strangers who landed on their coasts. None came willingly, but it often happened that sailors were cast ashore by shipwreck, for those who cross the Euxine have many dangers to face, by reason of the heavy storms.

V.

So Orestes and Pylades were taken before the priestess to be sacrificed, according to the custom of the land; but when the priestess heard where they had come from she was much distressed, being herself a woman of Greece. When she enquired of them who they were, and who were

their parents, Orestes told her that he was the son of the unhappy Agamemnon; then she embraced him and said she was his sister Iphigenia, whom all had long thought dead.

When the Grecian host was ready to set out for Troy, they assembled their fleet in the harbour of Aulis in Bœotia, but they were unable to leave Aulis and get to sea, because the winds continued unfavourable. So the augur, Calchas, was consulted, and he announced that Agamemnon had offended Diana, and that the winds would not change, nor the fleet reach Troy, unless he sacrificed to her his daughter Iphigenia.

Now Agamemnon would fain have given up the war, and let the princes with their followers return to their homes, rather than do this thing; but the Greeks refused, saying it would be against their sense of honour to give up the expedition, having once undertaken it; and they compelled Agamemnon to agree. Iphigenia herself submitted willingly, and consented to give up her life rather than that the honour of her people should suffer and that Paris and the Trojans should go unpunished.

But when Iphigenia had been decked with garlands and led as a victim to the altar, Diana covered the altar with a dark cloud, and when this disappeared, the host saw instead of Iphigenia a pure white roe, which was sacrificed to Diana in her stead. Then immediately the winds were favourable, the Greeks went aboard their ships, and sailed safely to Troy. Diana took Iphigenia in the cloud through the air to Tauris and there made her priestess of her temple.

When Iphigenia and Orestes discovered that they were brother and sister, they longed to fly together from this inhospitable land. Therefore Iphigenia prayed to Diana, who ordered the king to set them free; so Iphigenia went back to Greece with Orestes, who was now allowed to rest in peace in his own land after all his wanderings. Pylades married Electra, so he always lived with his friend; Orestes married his cousin Hermione, the daughter of Menelaus; and when his father was taken to the Elysian fields, Orestes inherited his kingdom; so he was king both of Lacedæmonia and of Mycenæ.

After his death, his son Tisamenus reigned, and was king when the Heraclidæ and the Dorians invaded the Peloponnesus. Tisamenus led his Achaians against them, but he was defeated, and the Heraclidæ conquered his whole country. Then Tisamenus led all those among the Achaians who would not be subject to the Heraclidæ and Dorians against the Ionians, who, you remember, had allowed the enemy to pass through their land. He drove them out and remained himself with the Achaians in their country.

That part of Greece was always called Achaia, and kept the name until the whole of Greece was conquered by the Turks. This was the punishment the Ionians got for befriending a strange people when they ought to have resisted their advance.

VI.

The Dorians had three kings at the time they were preparing at Naupactus to invade the Pelopon-

ensus: Temenus, Cresphontes, and Aristodemus. They were brothers and Heraclidæ, being great-great-grandsons of Hercules. Aristodemus was killed by lightning, leaving two sons, Eurysthenes and Procles, who were young children at the time; so Theras, their mother's brother, was made their guardian.

When the Dorians had conquered both the kingdoms of Tisamenus and of Pylus, not caring to live under one king, they divided the country into three districts: Argos, Lacedæmonia, and Messenia. Now as Messenia was the fairest and most fertile of the three, each king naturally wished to possess it, and not being able to decide the question amongst themselves, they agreed to cast lots. He whose name should be first drawn from the urn should have Argos, the second Lacedæmonia, and the last Messenia. As there was no paper in those days, it was the custom to write the names on pieces of broken pottery.

So the name of Temenus was written on one bit, that of Theras, the uncle of Eurysthenes and Procles, on another, and Cresphontes' name on a third. The three potsherds were then put into a vessel filled with water, and drawn out by a priest. Cresphontes, however, had not written his name on a piece of earthenware or baked clay, which does not melt in water, but on a simple piece of dried earth, which easily dissolves, leaving no trace but a little mud in the water.

Thus the priest drew out first Temenus' potsherd, then that of the two sons of Aristodemus; but that of Cresphontes was of course

not to be found. So Temenus became king of Argos, the sons of Aristodemus reigned in Lacedæmonia, and Cresphontes in Messenia. But on account of this deception there was always enmity between the kings of Sparta and the descendants of Cresphontes.

Cresphontes had a brother named Polyphontes, who was jealous of him and wished to become king in his place; to attain his object he was wicked enough to kill Cresphontes and all his children with the exception of one boy, Æpytus. His mother, Merope, contrived to hide him at the time, and afterwards sent him away to an ally of her murdered husband who lived in Ætolia.

Ætolia is a large tract of country watered by the river Achelous. Æpytus was brought up and educated here, and at stated times Merope, his mother, sent the old servant to whose charge he had been entrusted on the journey thither, to hear if all were well with him.

Of course Æpytus was told by this old man, as well as by his guardian, of his father's murder and his uncle's guilt, and he resolved to avenge the deed. As soon as he was old enough, he left Ætolia, telling no one what he meant to do: the wisest plan if you have any great work on hand, which is at the same time dangerous.

He journeyed through Achaia and Elis to Messenia; and when he arrived, he asked to be admitted into the presence of the king, saying he was an Ætolian who had slain the young Æpytus. Polyphontes had as good reason to fear Æpytus as Ægisthus had had to fear Orestes, so he thought this good news. and promised a large

reward. He said also that the stranger should live in his palace as long as he remained in Messenia. He then let it be known throughout all the land that on the following day it was his intention to celebrate a great feast in honour of the good news.

VII.

Now it was told to Merope that the man who said he had slain her son was at the Palace. On the same day the old servant came back from Ætolia, and announced that Æpytus was no longer there, and that nobody knew what had become of him. So Merope believed that he had really been murdered by this stranger. She would not be comforted, but wept and tore her hair, running wildly about the Palace.

It so happened that Æpytus, being weary after his journey, was sleeping on a bench in one of the corridors. Merope did not recognise him, for he had changed, in the years that had passed since she sent him away, from a child to a full grown youth. Scarce knowing what she did, she seized a dagger and would have plunged it into his heart, thinking him the slayer of Æpytus, had not the servant known him and told her it was her son. Then she threw herself on his neck, they all three wept for joy, and took counsel together how they might avenge themselves on Polyphontes.

The morrow was the day on which the tyrant had bidden all his subjects to a feast and solemn sacrifice; the stranger was expected to attend, and even Merope had received orders to be present.

Æpytus walked by the side of Polyphontes, and asked that he might have the honour of himself killing a bullock. During the ceremony, in which Polyphontes intended sacrificing many oxen, the two stood together, and when his turn came to sacrifice, Æpytus knocked Polyphontes on the head instead of the bull.

Then Merope called to the soldiers and the people, telling them that Æpytus was her son their king, who had thus avenged his father's murder. Cresphontes had been a good king, much loved by his people, whereas they hated his murderers. So they willingly accepted Æpytus, and his descendants reigned after him as kings of Messenia, and were called the Æpytidæ.

The sons of Aristodemus, Eurysthenes and Procles, were young children at the time that the Heraclidæ conquered the Peloponnesus, so their uncle, Theras, ruled for them until they were of age. Then they were both together kings of Sparta, and as each had descendants, it came about that two kings always ruled over the Spartans.

But Eurysthenes and Procles treated the inhabitants of Laconia with great harshness, making them subject in all things to the Dorians. So it happened that after a time the people of a great city called Helos revolted, and many other Laconians joined them; they were defeated by Agis, the son of Eurysthenes, All the Laconians who had borne arms against the Spartans were made bondsmen; they had to pay yearly tribute to them, the half of all the produce of their fields. No Spartan could be punished for killing a Helot.

THE STORY OF PERSEUS.

I.

ONCE upon a time two princes, named Acrisius and Proteus, shared the land of Argos, dividing the kingdom, but, as they were jealous of each other, each striving to get more than his share, there was much quarrelling, until at last Acrisius drove away Proteus, and reigned alone at Argos.

There all went well with him, but he could not enjoy a single hour of happiness, because he was troubled about a prophecy which foretold his death by the hand of his daughter's son. Because of this, he made up his mind she should never marry, and in order to prevent any of the neighbouring princes from seeing her, he shut her up in a great tower lined with brass.

Poor Danae (that was the name of his daughter) was very sad and lonely, but the gods pitied her, and sent her a little son to comfort her. When Acrisius heard of this he was much frightened, and very angry too; and he determined in his wicked heart that both Danae and the child should die, and gave orders that they should be thrust out to sea in an open chest.

Happily it was the calm time of the year; the breeze came from the land, so they were soon far out to sea, borne by the winds and the currents, the baby sleeping on its mother's breast.

"BORNE BY THE WINDS AND THE CURRENTS" (*p.* 68).

So passed two days and two nights, and Danae wept and thought the gods had forgotten her; but it was not so, for as the morning of the third day broke, she saw that the chest was floating under great cliffs; there was a long stretch of yellow sand, and on the beach she saw a man bearing in his hand a trident and net. The chest was rocking just beyond where the waves break on the shore, and as soon as he came near enough he threw his net over it and drew it safely to land. You may imagine how surprised he was. The man was too courteous to ask Danae many questions, and when she begged his pity for herself and the child, he said he would take

her to his own home and that she should be unto him as a daughter. The name of the island which Danae had come to in this strange way was Seriphos—and the fisherman was Dictys, brother of Polydectes the king.

II.

So passed many peaceful years, and Danae's son (who was called Perseus) grew strong and tall, skilled, too, in all manner of manly exercises; he loved the sea, and often went voyages for Dictys, his good adopted father, to the neighbouring isles. And the gods loved him, for he was brave and loyal and true.

Then, after fifteen years, trouble came to that happy home. Polydectes, the king of the island, lost his wife, and because Danae was a fair woman, and he knew her to be a king's daughter, he wished to marry her. Danae told him she had no love for him, nor for any man, and only desired to live for her boy Perseus, and that she would never marry him. Then, because he found that he could not compel her to his will, he became very angry, and said that if she would not be his wife, he would make her his slave.

Perseus was away in Samos when all this happened; it befell on a day that he fell asleep in a wood, and a strange dream came to him; he seemed to see standing over him a lady, taller than the daughters of men, and very beautiful; she wore a helmet and carried a spear, and over her shoulders hung a great brass shield. She spoke gently to him, telling him he must do an errand for her. She held up the shield, and Perseus

saw on its polished surface the face of a woman, beautiful, but most terrible, for it was pale as death, and about the brows were coiled vipers; she had eagle's wings, and brazen claws like the Harpies. Perseus shuddered as he looked, but the goddess told him that in the days to come he must fight and kill this monster—and even while she spoke, the vision faded away and he awoke.

Then he went home to Seriphos, and found his mother in the house of Polydectes—a slave! In his wrath he went up to the Palace, and would have slain the king had not Dictys pleaded with him to spare his life. He bade his mother follow him, and took her to the temple of Minerva, whence he knew that not even Polydectes would dare to take her.

Now Polydectes knew that as long as Perseus was on the island he should not be able to induce Danae to marry him, so he made a plot to get rid of him: and this is how he did it. He proclaimed a feast, at which all who were invited were expected to bring gifts. Of course he knew that Perseus had nothing to bring, and as soon as he appeared the king and all his nobles laughed and jeered at him. At last Perseus called out before them all, in the heat of his anger, "I will bring you such a gift as you never had before—I will bring you the Gorgon's head!" And Polydectes, scoffing, commanded him not to dare to appear again on the island without this wonderful present.

III.

PERSEUS went out from before the king, holding

his head high, but his heart already failed him, for he felt he had rashly promised that which he knew not how to perform. In his trouble he wandered on to the cliff, and almost unconsciously he prayed to Minerva—who appeared to him looking just as she had done in his dream; with her was a young man who looked scarcely older than Perseus himself, with winged sandals on his feet.

Minerva told him she knew all about his trouble, and would help him if he were indeed ready to face the terrible Gorgon. "But think well," she said, "before you start; those who serve the gods must be willing to brave many dangers and live laborious days; and there can be no turning back." And she said, "Art thou content?" And Perseus bowed his head and said, "I am content."

Then Minerva gave him directions as to how he must first find the three grey sisters, who have but one eye and one tooth between them; they would tell him the way to the garden of the Hesperides, who alone could help him to find the Gorgons. She warned him, too, that he must not look at Medusa, only at her image reflected in the brass of the shield, for her terrible eyes could turn all to stone. Then they girded on him a magic sword, and the youth, who was the god Mercury, gave him the winged sandals from off his feet, which would bear him over land and sea; and, at their command, he leapt from the cliff, floating like a bird.

IV.

So he went northward, guided by the magic

"THE DRAGON LAY COILED AROUND THE TREES" (*p.* 74).

sandals, past Athens and Thebes, and on past Thessaly, till he had left the fair land of Greece far behind him. Still on, ever towards the north star, over moors and fens and long tracts of barren country, past those dim isles where the sun never breaks through the mist and fog, till he came to the land where the wind blows cold over fields of ice. Here he found the three grey sisters sitting in the snow and singing to themselves under the rays of a wintry moon. As they sang they passed the eye from one to the other; they took not the least notice of Perseus, nor would they answer his question, until, in desperation, he threatened to take their one eye and throw it into the sea. Then,

grumbling, they told him that he was far from the garden of the Hesperides, and that if he wanted the nymphs he must turn round and go southward again until he came to Atlas. After this they fell asleep, and I have been told they turned into icebergs, which still float round and round the pole unceasingly.

Perseus was glad to turn his back on that dismal land. Joyfully he flew past the white island, through the everlasting fogs, till the sun shone out once more, and each day its rays grew warmer and the sea more blue, and at last he saw a great mountain whose top was in the clouds. He knew that this must be Atlas, and that on the lower slopes he should find the garden with the golden fruit.

You remember how Hercules was sent hither by Eurystheus; just as then, the dragon lay coiled around the trees, ever watching, never sleeping. The maidens stopped their dancing, and asked Perseus if he too desired a golden apple. But he said he had but one wish, to know the way to the Gorgons' lair. They told him, shuddering, that no man could look upon those monsters and live; but when they found that he was set on this search, they went up the mountain to ask Atlas, their uncle, who can see far over land and sea.

Atlas could just discern the Gorgons where they lay, but he told Perseus never to go near them unless he wore the cap of darkness, which would render him invisible. He offered to send one of his nieces to the under-world to fetch this cap if Perseus would promise him one thing, that when he came back with Medusa's head, he would show it him that he might lose feeling and sight and be-

come a stone for ever. "For," he said, "I am old and very weary." And Perseus swore a great oath that he would do this thing. Then one of the nymphs went down into Hades, and when she returned, bringing the magic hat, Perseus put it on, and vanished from their sight.

V.

ONCE more he flew northward, out of the sunshine into the cold and the mist and the fog—leaving all pleasant sights behind him, and there was no sound in earth or heaven.

But then, at first faintly, but growing ever louder, he heard the rustle of the Gorgons' wings, and he knew his journey was ended. He remembered Minerva's warning, and holding his shield high over his head, he swooped down guided by the reflection on the shield, and with one stroke of the magic sword severed Medusa's fair and horrible head from her body.

Then he wrapped it in his goat-skin and sprang into the air. Medusa's body sank back on to the rock, and the wings and the claws rattled on the stones. And the other two Gorgons awoke, and when they saw the dead body they flew, howling, after Perseus. They could not see him, because he was invisible, but they smelt the blood, and followed in his track. And for the first time Perseus' heart failed him; for all he was so brave, he trembled before those weird sisters. But he prayed to Minerva with all his might, and as he prayed, the magic sandals seemed to gain swiftness; he flew so fast that the Gorgons soon sank

back exhausted, and were left far behind. Southwards he sped until he came to where Atlas rears his mighty head into the sky, and he unwrapped the terrible head and showed it to poor patient Atlas, who was thus turned into a great crag which you may see at this day.

VI.

PERSEUS thanked the gentle Hesperides for their help, and left them, though they would fain have kept him to play awhile with them. But Perseus told them he was not his own master, but a servant of the gods, and they, being immortal, knew that to their high will all men and heroes must submit. So he left them, journeying eastward towards the burning plains of Libya.

Many days he flew over trackless wastes of sand, where the sun's rays burn with fiercest heat, and no tree grows, and sometimes he seemed to see in the distance the calm waters of a lake, with date and palm-trees, but lo! when he approached, it faded from his sight, and nothing remained but the dreary desert.

He longed with all his heart now to see the blue waters of the Mediterranean, that he might fly over them to his home in Seriphos, for he yearned for his mother and good Dictys and the happy life he had left. But not yet was he to return in triumph, the gods had other work for him to do, and the more he strove to fly northward, so much the more was he driven back by fierce winds and whirling sand-storms.

Long he struggled, until he became faint and weary and sad, for he thought now he must

perish in those wilds—and that all his toil and labour would have been useless. Then he remembered the words that Mercury had spoken to him, as they stood on the cliff at Seriphos, how that the sandals he lent him could not err or go astray; and when this thought came to him he gave up all effort of his own and just let himself be guided whither they would, and he found himself floating quite easily and pleasantly along the breeze, not in a northerly but in an easterly direction.

And as he flew, he saw beneath him a green and fertile country, very restful to look upon after his long wandering in the desert; he also saw a mighty river and many a fair city and ancient temple. He knew that this must be Egypt, and wondered if here he might stay and rest awhile, for he was weary. But no, onwards the sandals bore him, along the far-famed shores of Palestine, and the way was dark, for the sky was black with smoke. He flew somewhat nearer the ground, and he saw that the fair lowland valleys lay under water, and that the hills were blasted with fire. And he said to himself that the land was accursed for some man's sin.

As he journeyed, he marvelled yet more, for, chained to a rock, within reach of the sea, he saw the white figure of a maiden, unclothed, save for her long hair, which covered her as with a mantle. She was looking out to sea with wide-open startled eyes, and the rising tide touched her feet as she stood. Perseus said aloud, "What manner of courting may this be that I have come to?" but the waves beating on the cliffs drowned his voice,

and he was invisible, because he wore the cap of darkness.

As he looked, far out at sea, he saw a black mass moving—nearer it came and nearer, rolling over and over as you may have seen porpoises do when at play. But this monster was as big as a whale, and had a cruel mouth like a shark's. He came slowly on, now through the surf rearing his great body up out of the sea and opening his hungry jaws to devour the maiden, but down came Perseus, quickly he tore the goat-skin from around Medusa's head, and the terrible sea-monster rolled back with a mighty crash, a great black rock! You may see it to this day, on the Levantine shore of the Mediterranean Sea, with the blue waves gently lapping its base.

VII.

So Perseus knew that this was the work the gods had had for him to do, and he rejoiced greatly that he had freed the land from the monster and so saved the maiden's life. He went to her now, and with his sword he cleft the chains of brass which bound her. Then he took off his cap of darkness, and you may imagine how surprised she was to see him, fair and young and brave, instead of the horrible black sea-monster!

For having closed her eyes and almost fainted from fear, she knew nothing of what had happened, and was each moment expecting her death. And Perseus said, "Fair damsel, put all fear aside —I have freed you—and now you belong to me, and I mean to take you to my home and make you my wife. Only," he added, "tell me your

"Perseus said, 'Fair damsel, put all fear aside—I have freed you—and now you belong to me.'"

name, and why I find you in this plight." Then she said, trembling, yet with a great joy in her heart, "Oh, fair youth, I know not who you are, but you are my deliverer from a cruel death; I am thine, thy slave or thy wife, as the gods please."

And Perseus said, "No slave art thou, but, if I mistake not, a king's daughter."

Then she told him, weeping, that she was Andromeda, the daughter of Cepheus and Cassiopeia, that she had sinned no sin herself, but must needs suffer for her mother's crime. For Cassiopeia had once boasted of her, with a mother's pride, that she was fairer than Atergatis, queen of the fishes. Then Atergatis in her wrath, had sent the floods, and her brother, the Fire-king, the earthquakes and the fire from the awful centre of the world, which rends the hills and buries the towns and villages under burning, molten lava.

So the land was wasted, and no man could till his field or plant his vineyard. Not content with this, Atergatis had caused this monster to be born. The people had fasted and wept, and sacrificed to the gods, but the priest said that naught but the daughter's blood could atone for the mother's idle words. So the people had made a great feast, then a procession had been formed, and with songs and dance, she, the princess, had been led forth to die. So thankful were they that at last the curse might, perchance, be taken from their land. But Cepheus and Cassiopeia sat weeping in their palace. More Andromeda knew not; but she feared now for herself and for Perseus, that the wrath of Atergatis might be kindled against

them afresh. But Perseus laughed, saying that Minerva and Mercury were stronger and nearer the heart of Jupiter than the queen of the fishes! So he calmed her fears, and took her back to her parents—and Minerva prevailed with Jupiter, who commanded that the fire and the floods should cease.

And Perseus married Andromeda, the fair white maiden he had rescued in so strange a manner, but though he yearned for his home in the sunny isles of Greece, he tarried yet a year in Palestine, Cepheus and Cassiopeia being loth to part with the daughter whom they cherished even as one raised from the dead. When the twelve months were over, he built for himself a galley and sailed with Andromeda and a goodly train of slaves and attendants, besides much gold and silver and jewellery, his wife's dowry, to Seriphos. You may think how thankful was Danae to have her son back again after seven long years.

VIII.

Perseus left Andromeda with his mother and the good Dictys, and went up to the palace of the king, bearing with him, hidden under the goat-skin, the promised gift, the head of Medusa. He found the king feasting with his nobles. Polydectes recognised him, changed as he was, and grew pale with fear. Perseus walked straight up the hall, looking neither to the right nor to the left, until he stood before the king. Then he spoke, so that all might hear, "Behold the promised gift, Oh king!" With that he drew forth the head, and, slowly as

they sat, Polydectes and all that gay company lost sight, feeling, and hearing, and turned to stone figures.

Perseus left the hall, and called all the people together, and told them that Polydectes was dead and proclaimed Dictys king in his stead. And he sailed away himself, with his wife and his mother, to Argos, where he had been born. There he found many changes, for Proteus had returned from Tiryns, bringing with him many mighty men of war, and had driven Acrisius from the kingdom, reigning there in his stead. But he was a harsh ruler, so when Perseus told them who he was, and of the great deeds he had done, the nobles and common people joined him, and Proteus was defeated and killed, and Perseus was made king.

After two years, however, it became known to Perseus that the heart of Danae yearned for her father, for he was an old man now, and must be weary and worn with trouble. So, to comfort his mother, Perseus said he would fetch his grandfather, and bring him to spend the remainder of his days with them in peace at Argos. He sailed away, and arriving, found the Pelasgians celebrating their great yearly festival with feasting and dancing and games. And Acrisius sat with the king of the Pelasgi, his long white beard resting on his knees. Perseus won many crowns, and the end of the festival was approaching, when, in the last contest, he hurled a quoit, with all his strength towards the goal, but a sudden gust of wind caught it on its way and carried it till it fell on the foot of Acrisius, wounding him, and of this hurt he died. So was the prophecy fulfilled.

THE STORY OF THESEUS.

I.

In the city of Trœzen lived a princess called Aithra with her only son, Theseus. She was lonely, for her husband had left her many years before, and Theseus did not even know who his father was: and when he asked his mother, as he often did, she told him that he must be patient, and that when the gods willed it, he would know all.

One day, when the lad was fifteen years old, Aithra took him up the hill on which stood the temple of Poseidon, and leading him to a spot behind the building, showed him a great flat stone; the thicket was dense, and he could scarcely see the stone for the shrubs and wild creeping plants which had grown over it. Aithra told her son to try to lift it, but though he tugged and strained at the huge mass with all his might, he could not move it. Then Aithra sighed, and said that the time had not yet come. Then Theseus wondered, but he made up his mind that, come what would, he would lift the stone, and that not many years hence.

So he spent his days in wrestling and boxing, and in hunting the wild boar on the hills, till he had gained more than ordinary strength. And each year, on the appointed day, his mother took him to the thicket behind the temple; but it was not until the third year that, putting his whole brave heart into the effort, to his great joy, he was able

to raise the stone. He found that the slab of stone covered the entrance to a cave, and in this he found a sword with a golden hilt, and a pair of golden sandals.

Then, looking out to sea, Aithra showed him the hills of Attica, and told him that his father was Ægeus, King of Athens, She told him, too, weeping, that he must now leave her and travel thither; that he must go boldly to the palace of King Ægeus and tell him that the stone was lifted, and that as a pledge thereof, he must show him what he had found beneath.

II.

THEN, after she had embraced Theseus and prayed to the gods to keep him safe and give him strength, his mother left him, going sadly down the hill to her lonely home. And Theseus sat long by the temple, thinking of his happy, careless boyhood, and of the journey that lay before him. He thought, too, of his father, and wondered if he had other sons, and why he had not sent for him before. Then he bethought himself that, having as yet performed no noble deed, his father might not be willing to acknowledge him as his son and heir, in spite of the pledges he brought, and his heart failed him. But he took courage again, remembering Hercules, who through much toil and danger, had won for himself immortal renown, and he vowed in his boyish heart, that he, too, would seek adventure, redressing wrong and succouring the distressed, that his father might have pride in his prowess.

So, instead of taking a ship and sailing to Athens, which he might very easily have done, he determined to go by land, over the mountains. He started bravely on this rough and rugged road, toiling up and up, sometimes over dreary downs, sometimes through dense undergrowth, where he could scarcely cleave a way for himself, then wading through bogs and marshes, till on a lonely heath he saw a man wrapped in a bear-skin and sitting on a heap of stones.

The man called out to him that he was a silly fly who had come into his spider's net; that it was no use to struggle as he meant to suck his blood, as he had sucked that of many another traveller, "for," said he, "I am Corynetes, the Club-bearer." "Club-bearer or no," said Theseus, "I will kill thee."

With that, he rushed at him, and Corynetes came to meet him. Theseus found that his sword could not touch him by reason of his bearskin, so he watched his opportunity and seized him by the throat. Long was the struggle and hard; thrice Theseus was on the ground, but in the end he strangled the Club-bearer. Leaving him where he lay, he descended now into a pleasant valley, where he found shepherds and shepherdesses with their flocks, and when he told them what he had done, they rejoiced with singing and dancing, because they could now feed their herds in peace, without fear of this cruel tyrant.

Theseus pursued his way towards the Isthmus; when he reached this, and was passing along a narrow road between high rocks, he came upon Sinis, the robber. This Sinis was the terror of

"SEIZED HIM BY THE THROAT" *p.* 84.

all travellers, for he used to seize them and bind them hand and foot between young pine trees; then he would let the trees shoot apart, and the unfortunate men were torn asunder. He was now sitting, watching the path, with his cord and his pine trees all ready. It was long since a traveller had dared to pass that way, and he had had no booty, so he rejoiced when he saw Theseus, and started out, thinking to take him unawares.

Theseus had learned by this time to be always on his guard, and was ready to receive him. Fiercely they wrestled, up and down on the rocky path, but the years of practice at Trœzen now stood Theseus in good stead, and

at last he threw Sinis on the ground, standing over him. He said, however, that a speedy death by one stroke of his good sword was too good for such as he; so he bound him with his own cords, and killed him in the way he had been in the habit of killing other people.

III.

THESEUS was faint and weary after these two encounters, and would fain have rested, but as he went over the hills to Megara, he saw a barrier of stones in the path, and near by, on the cliff, sat Sciron. As Theseus could not pass, he was obliged to stop, and when Sciron perceived him, he shouted out to him, jeering, and ordered him to come up and wash his feet. This he did to all wayfarers, and forced them to do his bidding —then, whilst they were bending down to perform the task, he playfully kicked them over the cliff into the sea! Many had he slain in this way.

Theseus replied that he would wash no man's feet, but would compel Sciron to wash his! At this Sciron laughed long and loud: and again Theseus had to wrestle. A hard fight he found it, for this time he did not come fresh to the combat; but even so, he was the better man of the two, and at length Sciron, exhausted, craved for peace, saying he would let Theseus pass. "I shall certainly pass," said Theseus, "with or without your permission; but I have not done with you yet. As you have done to others, so will I do to you. Wash my feet!" Sciron was forced to obey, and whilst he was doing it, Theseus

kicked him over the cliff. So, keeping the sea always on his right, he journeyed on till he came to the sacred city of Eleusis, whose king was Cercyon, the wrestler.

Every stranger who came to his city Cercyon challenged to wrestle with him; being very strong, he always overthrew them, and those he overthrew he slew.

Now Theseus being very weary, did not go at once into the city, but laid him down outside the walls and slept for two days and two nights without once waking.

After this he felt quite strong again So he went into the market-place and asked the way to the king's palace. When the people told him, wondering, he went in boldly, and found King Cercyon sitting at supper, a whole sheep before him. Theseus spoke no word, but sat down with with him, and being very hungry, he ate of the sheep, but more sparingly than Cercyon, who did not move from his plate until there was nothing left but the bones! Then, still silently, they went out into the courtyard, where all the people had gathered to see the contest. Here they wrestled till the sun went down, and when the stars came out, they fought on still in the darkness. Sometimes one prevailed, sometimes the other, but at last all King Cercyon's strength failed him, by reason of the heavy meal he had eaten, and he fell heavily to the ground—quite dead.

IV.

THE people of Eleusis rejoiced, for Cercyon had been cruel to his own people as well as to strangers,

and so grateful were they to Theseus that they were minded to make him their king. But he told them he had a mission to perform, and so left them, promising to come again. Then, because the elders of the city told him Sinis was kin to Ægeus, he knew that he must be purified from blood-guiltiness before he presented himself to his father. For this purpose he had to go out of his way, to the sons of Phytalus, who know the mysteries of the gods.

On his way thither, in the vale of Aphisus, he met a man, richly apparelled, tall and strong, who, with many courteous words, entreated him to come to his castle and rest and refresh himself, and to sleep on his wondrous bed. This bed he said, was made to fit all comers. Now Theseus was both hungry and weary, and he gladly followed the man up a dark path under the shadow of the cliffs. Looking down the path by which they had come, they saw other travellers with long strings of asses laden with merchandise, slowly winding up the narrow way. The man excused himself to Theseus and turned back; and Theseus heard him now inviting these merchants in the self-same words.

The path grew narrower and darker, but still Theseus toiled on; presently he met an old man bent with toil, who, pitying his youth, begged him, trembling, to fly for his life, if that were still possible, for that this stranger was a wicked robber who lured all travellers into his dismal castle, and made them sleep on his wonderful bed, from which none ever rose alive. For, if the sleeper were too tall, he lopped off his limbs until they fitted the bed; if too short, they were stretched out to its

length. Theseus spoke not, but his heart swelled with anger; with set, stern face, and silently, he turned back along the path by which he had come, meeting the man and the travellers.

Procrustes trembled, for, looking at Theseus, he saw that he knew him for what he was. Theseus, in his wrath, seemed to have the strength of ten; he felled him to the earth and killed him where he lay.

V.

So, musing on these things, and the strange adventures which had befallen him, Theseus journeyed on to Aphidnai, the home of the Phylatids; here he was made to bathe in the river Cephisus and offer a yearling ram to Jupiter. So was he purified from the blood of Sinis, and could go on to Athens.

The fame of his deeds had gone before him and the crowd in the market-place received him with shouts, welcoming him as one of the heroes, though they knew not who he was. He would not tarry with them, however, but went straight to the palace of the king in the Acropolis. Then he asked for Ægeus, but no man answered him, though many of the sons of Pallas sat round the board, making merry over the wine-cup.

Now Medea, the dark witch woman, was among them; she knew who Theseus was, and she feared, seeing him so fair and brave, that he might win his father's love and gain the kingdom, which she wanted for her own son, Medus. So she made a plan in her evil heart to get rid of him. Leaving the feast unperceived, she arrayed herself in all her jewels and fine apparel, making herself so fair

that all eyes turned towards her when she entered, holding a golden cup in her hand.

She smiled and offered to pledge Theseus in the wine, but he distrusted her for all her beauty, and when she refused to drink first of the cup he dashed it to the ground. And lo! the poison in it hissed and bubbled on the marble floor.

Then Medea called for her fiery chariot and, drawn by her winged dragons, she vanished for ever from Greece, where she had wrought nothing but harm since Jason, the Argonaut, had brought her from Colchis.

Then Theseus found Ægeus where he sat lonely in his chamber, and showed him the sword and the sandals. By these pledges Ægeus knew he was his son, and fell on his neck and kissed him; then, coming out into the banquet hall, he proclaimed him before all the people as his heir. Now his cousins, the sons of Pallas, were his enemies, because they had got all the power of the kingdom into their own hands, and knew now that their day was over. Being mad with rage and jealousy and wine, they rose up, and seizing weapons from the wall, hurled them at Theseus. So he fought them, one against twenty, yet beat them all, for the gods helped him. Some were slain, and the rest fled from Athens.

VI.

So Theseus dwelt with the old king his father, and all the people rejoiced in their young prince, and in the thought that the tyranny of the sons of Pallas, and of Medea, the witch woman, was

over. There was music and singing, feasting and dancing.

But when the winter had passed, and the sweet spring days lengthened, Theseus saw that some secret sorrow weighed on the hearts of men, whereat he marvelled, but when, in the street, he asked what this might be, and what they dreaded, men passed him with averted face, and he could get no true answer. But a day came when a herald arrived in the town, demanding the yearly tribute.

Then the people, with groans and tears, told Theseus, that on account of a great wrong done, there had been war between Athens and Crete, that King Minos had come over with a mighty host, and had totally defeated the Athenians, who could only obtain peace on one condition, that each year seven youths and seven maidens should be sent to Crete, to be done with according to his will. Three times had the herald come in his black-sailed ship, three times had there been mourning and woe in Athens, as the victims, who were chosen by lot, had sailed away.

Theseus went boldly to the herald in the market place, and said that lots need only be cast for six youths this year, as he himself would be the seventh. The herald, looking on him and seeing his princely bearing—pitying, too, his youth, tried to dissuade him, telling him of the fate of those who went, how they were thrown to the Minotaur, the monster who feeds on the flesh of men. But Theseus, remembering the dangers he had already faced and overcome, thought he might, perchance, find a means to destroy even this monster and so

save his country. So he persisted. King Ægeus wept, for he had learned to love this brave young son, who had come to him like a gift from the gods, in his old age. Theseus promised, if the gods gave him success, that on his return he would take down the black sail, and hoist a white one in its place. So would the heart of his father rejoice.

VII.

The sad ship came to Crete, and the victims were taken before the judgment seat of Minos, wisest of mortal kings. Theseus spoke boldly, as became a king's son, craving only one boon, that he might be thrown first to the beast. Now Minos had heard from the herald how Theseus had chosen of himself to come, and he, thinking it a pity so brave a youth should perish, urged him even now to go back to his father, sending some other youth in his place. But when Theseus refused, he thought him mad, and told the guards to take him back to prison, and on the morrow to cast him to the monster, as he desired.

Now it happened that Ariadne, the king's daughter, coming at that moment out of her white marble hall, saw Theseus as he stood before her father, and loved him for his courage and his beauty, even as Medea had loved Jason in the far land of Colchis. So she cast about in her mind how she might save him. She went secretly to him by night in his prison, giving him two things, a sword and a silken thread. "But," she said, "if you escape by my help, you must promise to take me back with you to Athens, for my father would

never forgive me for this thing I have done." And Theseus promised, nothing loth.

The next morning, when the guards came to open his prison, and lead him to the entrance of the labyrinth, he took the thread in his hand, and fastened it securely to a tree. The labyrinth had been devised by the cunning workman Dædalus, at the command of King Minos, on purpose for the Minotaur; it was composed of winding ways and passages, so intricate that it was impossible, once being in, ever to find the way out again!

With the clue in his hand, Theseus entered a dark shadowy grove; he went through caverns and among rocks and under arches, groping his way, now turning to the right, now to the left, until he came to a high marble wall, lofty, massive, mysterious; there seemed to be no door or window, but one great block of stone gave way at his touch. Then the way became even more winding, and he would have been lost, if he had not held Ariadne's thread tight in his hand. Then, at first faintly, but getting ever louder as he advanced, he heard the roar of the Minotaur, like a hundred bulls and fifty lions all roaring together. In the very centre of the labyrinth he came upon the monster, and he started back with horror when he saw him. For he was a beast such as had never existed on the face of the earth. He had the body of a man, but the head of a bull, but he roared like a lion, and tore his victims with a lion's teeth.

He rushed at Theseus, and the labyrinth echoed again and again with the noise that he made. Theseus avoided his onslaught, springing nimbly aside, and stabbed him as he passed. Again and again he

thrust at him with his sword, but it seemed as though he could not even wound him, so tough was his hide, and the heart of Theseus began to fail him, for he feared that all the prowess he had gained would not now avail him to enable him to overcome this monster.

However, the Minotaur too must have lost courage, for suddenly he fled, Theseus pursuing. And a wonderful chase that was—over hills and valleys, through thickets dense with undergrowth, through caverns so dark that Theseus could not see the beast and was only guided by the hollow sound of his hoofs, over torrent beds and beneath mighty cliffs, till at last he came up with him as he lay breathless and panting on a slab of rock, and thrust his sword into his throat. So Theseus killed the Minotaur.

VIII.

You may fancy how tired Theseus was after the fight and the chase; if it had not been for the clue which he still clung to, he would have sunk down and died where he was, in despair at ever finding his way out of that wonderful maze. But after a short rest, slowly and very wearily he began his journey back, limping, too, for his feet had been cut by the stones and rocks in the mad race. He had to grope his way as he trudged on, for the chase had taken many hours, and the day was now far spent. Indeed, when at last he reached the entrance to the labyrinth, it was dark.

Going back to prison, he found the guards sleeping, Ariadne having drugged them, so, after freeing

"HE LAY BREATHLESS AND PANTING" *p.* 94.

the others, silently and stealthily they went down to the harbour, where they unmoored the black-sailed ship and sailed away to Naxos, Ariadne going with them. When their flight was discovered, Minos forbore to pursue, recognising in the slaying of the Minotaur a sign from Heaven that it was the will of the gods that he should no longer punish the people for the sin of their king. So the ship of doom no longer sailed to Crete in the fair springtide, and the sound of wailing was no more heard in Attica.

Theseus went back to Athens, but poor old King Ægeus never saw him again, for somehow he forgot to put up the white sail, which I am

sure you will think was very thoughtless of him! Ægeus had been watching on the cliffs till he was weary with hope deferred, and when he saw the boat returning with the black sail set, in his sudden grief and sorrow, he fell into the sea and was drowned.

So Theseus became king of Athens, and ruled for many years prudently and well, performing also many mighty deeds.

THE END

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